



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

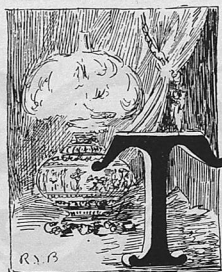
JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

## THE ERA OF LIGHT.

BY

HENRY W. FISCHER.



THE difference in effect between light and dark in decoration never appealed to me with such unmistakable force as upon a recent evening, when I visited the respective club houses of the Liederkrantz and Arion societies. The first brilliant in coloring, bestowed in unstinted quantity and

composing graceful panels, borders, scrolls, rosettes, and a vast variety of decorative features, all the work of an artist of unquestionable ability. A *toute ensemble* that impresses the eye most agreeably, and enchains attention by its massiveness and its fluency of lines.

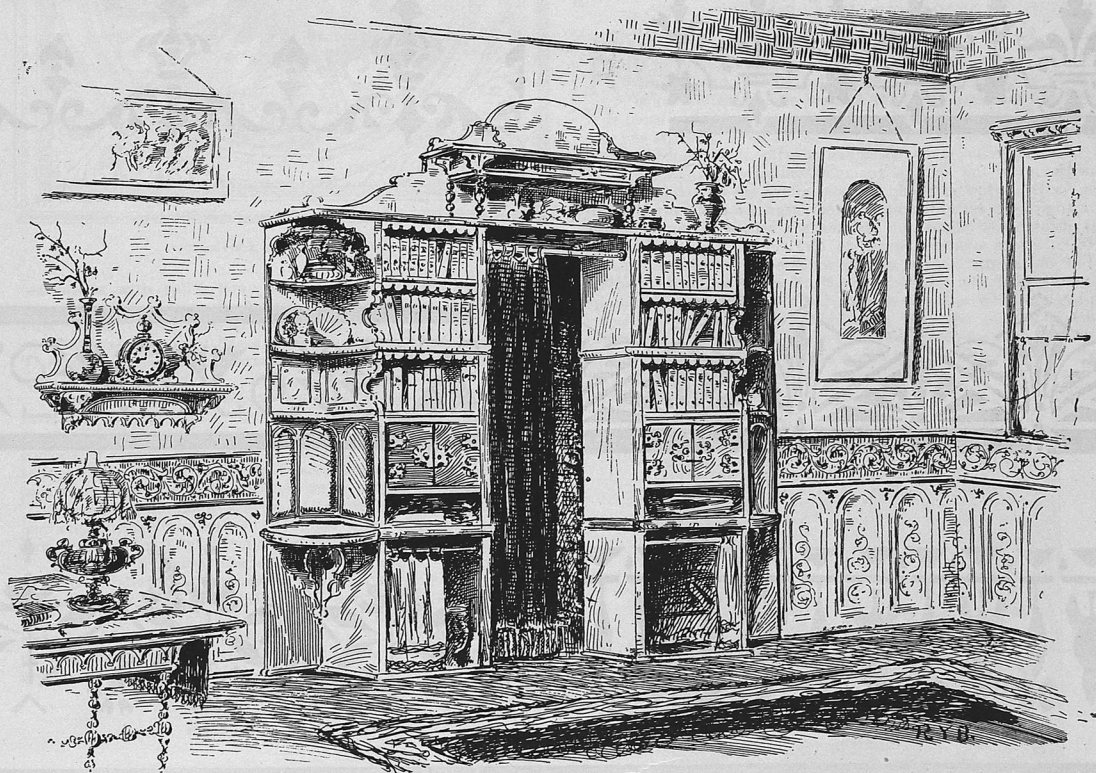
has been partially sacrificed to the end that a beautiful and tasteful room has been produced.

In the Arion room are electric globes, each shooting forth radiance upon empty ground and upon white ceilings and walls. Here the glare seeks every crevice, and drags forth whatever there may be worthy the visitor's thought and sight. The room is expanded; it seems larger than it should by right be or than it is in fact. It has the appearance of immensity far beyond even its real size.

That then is the ordinary comparison between a use of light and a preference for dark colors, and incidentally the bearing upon it of gas and of electricity.

A room intended for the use of the public, or for large and pretentious gatherings, a reception room, ballroom and the like should unqualifiedly be finished in a tone as light as possible; strictly speaking, "down party" or deep colors should be avoided. It is a principle that has generally been favored by architects, and one that usually appeals to the public wish to have its enjoyments in the midst of inspiring environments.

Think for a moment of the *Galerie de Glace*, the Grand Reception Salon at Versailles, where from Louis XVI. to Napoleon were rehearsed the most enchanting social scenes that probably



SIMPLE TREATMENT OF DOORWAY, BY R. Y. BARROWS.

The second building, white and untarnished from the purity left upon it by the kalsominer, relies for its adornment upon the colorless medallions and arabesques and arrow and dart headings, the centre piece from which spring the electroliers and a multitude of small pieces distributed where there appears to be a place for them without intruding upon the general effect, or having the appearance of mere appliqued additions, each one has a *raison d'être*, and each performs its part toward the general result. And, as I say, there is not one particle of color throughout.

The Liederkrantz hall is lighted by multitudes of gas jets that sacrifice some of the best, though deepest shaded, among the wall paintings, the bright streams that flow from the burners bring forth most of the frescoes into satisfactory prominence, while the shadows are deepened, and their somberness conceals much that a more searching light would disclose. The sides of the large dining room are brought together, the ceiling is somewhat lowered, and one marvels how such an apparently great crowd can be accommodated in such an apparently small apartment. The heavy colors and the gas light have had the tendency to contract the space, and an appearance of breadth and height

ever occurred, and where later William was declared Emperor of Germany. That is a long, comparatively narrow apartment, walled with looking glass upon one side and long windows upon the other, the ceiling made up of oil paintings. So, too, with the new castles of the Bavarian King, this unwritten law has been observed.

When dignified or ecclesiastical purposes are the object of constructing a building, somber colors are desirable, and as a perpetual shade is sought for, and no striking examples of colors would be in harmony with the presumed feelings of the audience, gas is suitable as a lighting medium.

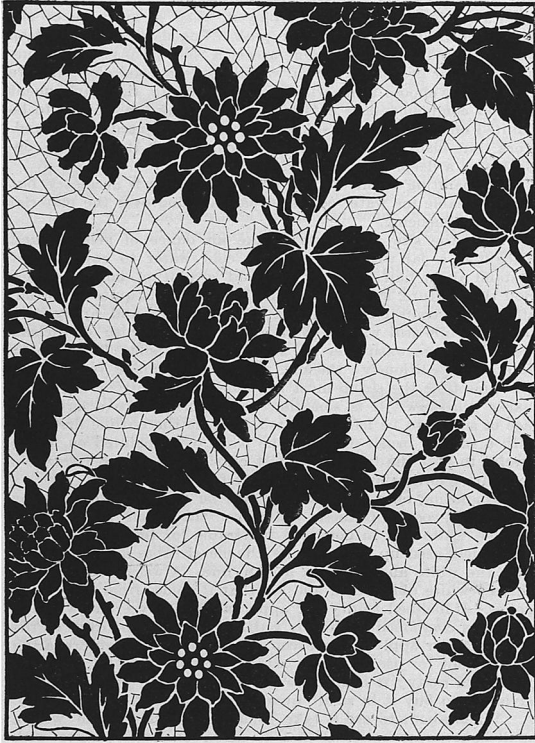
Light colors, as we all know, reflect light and dark colors, absorb and hold it, and as to reflect the light means to augment it, it is desirable to have a low key in interior decorations in such rooms as these. On the other hand, dark colors absorb light, and the electric spark, with its penetrating, scrutinizing capacity should be used to bring out the beauties of the designs.

In the gas light green and blue lose their individuality and blend as one; to the eye, all the light shades of both are lost, so that the delicate half tints of the fresco artists are indistin-

## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

guishable, and their effect is gone. Red on a rough surface becomes almost brown, while on a smooth surface it retains its vitality and its own appearance. Yellow takes on a reddish hue.

Another serious objection to gas used in public rooms where large quantities are employed, is the impalpable dust that sifts from it into the lungs of the audience and on to the paintings



PANEL FILLING, BY W. MADDEN, OF "DECORATION."

of the decorators. Hold a china plate over a gas light for a moment and mark the blackness that soon accumulates upon the surface. If so short exposure soils to such extent, what must be the effect of a thousand burners, blazing away their utmost all night? How would it be likely to affect brush work? And if there is sufficient refuse cast into the air to injure the delicate pencillings of an artist, how much more would it affect the delicate membrane of the throat or lungs by inhalation! There is also heat from it and frequently an unsavory odor, both foreign to the incandescent lamp.

For homes, use in parlors, bedchambers and other family purposes, the electric light is not desirable. It destroys, or tends to destroy, the social feeling and appearance that should always cling to the family circle. Gas is very much better, while candles are *par excellence*, the true social illuminant. The Courts of Europe are dependent upon candles for their light, and even

though the expense be great and the consumption of stock greater, yet they give a soft, odorous effulgence that is grateful to the eyes and conducive to romantic thoughts. The nobility follows in the steps of their kings, and our first families have fallen into the custom.

Yet there are many owners of private houses who have introduced electric lights into their homes, and the larger apartment buildings are supplied in the same manner. The white light is used only in the hall or vestibule, while in the parlor and reception room the exceeding brilliancy is modified by colored globes. The expense of placing the electric wires and keeping it in proper condition is very considerable, entailing a first outlay of about \$1,500 for the suitable machinery, with the addition of an engineer to give it attention.

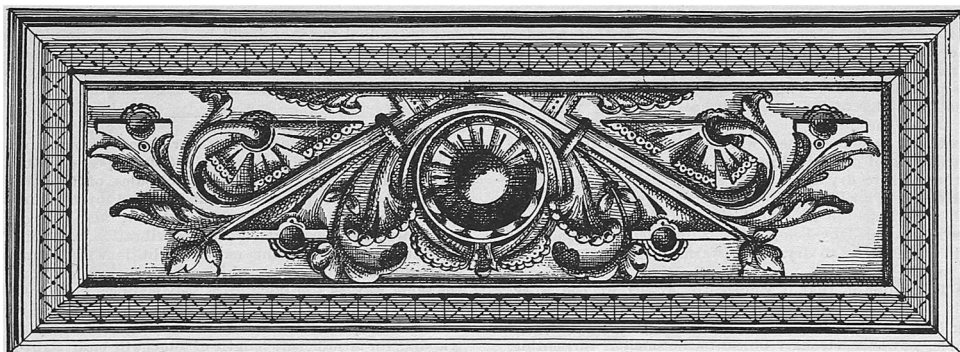
The gradual growth of the electric light and its adoption by so many houses offers a fine opportunity for the architect to devise some means whereby the wires may be run upon the surface of wall or ceilings and yet be decorative in their position. Often now, when these wires are introduced in offices or homes they are permitted to run over the surface of the ceiling and the wall, concealed by a piece of molding carefully attached over the line taken by the wire. While this is necessary, it is neither pleasing in appearance nor does it protect the wire from dampness and other injurious effects, nor is it entirely free from danger.

In new houses the wires are run through the wall, which is also very objectionable in these ways: As the house settles the wires are subjected to a strain likely to break them, while the mortar eats into them. This was the case in a prominent club house recently erected here, and the trouble occasioned thereby was extreme. The wires in this building, contrary to the architect's advice, were injured by the mortar and the settling down of the walls. The electricity ran into the ground and the lamps were useless. The architect found it necessary to have the walls cut into to reach the foundation of the trouble, thereby injuring the decoration greatly and ensuring considerable expense. The only way to avoid such accidents as this is to run the wires through gas pipes, as was done in the new residence of Pottier Palmer, in Chicago. These pipes may be laid in the flooring or some recess in the walls where they can be reached and examined by the electrician. As an ordinary gaspipe is not a furnishing acquisition to any room, a smart decorator should devise some means for beautifying them or hiding them within some decoration.

### POLISHED WALL SURFACES.

WHERE no direct external light can be obtained and in dining-rooms, buffets, etc., polished surfaces of walls have obvious advantages. Elsewhere glazed material will have a brightening, cheery appearance on a dull day, but with sunshine all charm disappears. Even where polish is suitable, a semi-polish will frequently look better than a full polish, and this may be said of marble mantels, on which the latter is becoming less of a rarity. Where different colored marbles are introduced, some dead, others polished, the effect is seldom good. On relief work, or where there are projections, polish practically abolishes shadow, and thus diminishes sharpness and crispness of light and shade. For interior work in hardwood decorators almost invariably dispense with a polished surface, which at times perplexes the sight with white light.

A CANDELABRA has the lights shaded by translucent shells, on which landscape scenes are painted in rich dark translucent colors.



PANEL FILLING FOR STONE OR WOOD CARVING, BY R. FISCHINGER.